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Turner says CIA failed in Iran

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Central Intelligence Agency Director Adm. Stansfield Turner told an audience of several hundred lawyers here Friday that the government can keep its spies honest without restricting their effectiveness.

Turner described the CIA agent of the future as a person whose "forte" would be "deducing the intentions of foreign powers," as someone who would be an expert on a country's economy and culture as well as military intelligence.

But Turner admitted the CIA had failed in just that way in Iran.

"We predicted lots of problems with political dissidents and economic unrest and religious opposition," he said. "What we didn't see was that under the aegis of a 78-year-old exiled religious leader, a revolutionary movement could become so strong that the Shah with his police force could not control it."

The CIA director was the first of several prominent government officials, including three U.S. Supreme Court justices, scheduled to speak in Dallas during the American Bar Association's annual convention under way through next Wednesday.

In an optimistic, if tepid, speech about the future of U.S. intelligence gathering, Turner said a society that asks its spies to be legally accountable does not force them to be ineffective.

At the same time, Turner urged the prosecution of "irresponsible ... traitorous" people who deliberately disclose classified information. He said he has proposed a new criminal statute to be used against people who reveal the identities of undercover intelligence agents, and he said he supported pending legislation to limit the scope of what can be revealed under the Freedom of Information Act.

Turner said there are times when the interests of national security are so vital that the government must forego prosecution of people accused of espionage against the United States, if putting them on trial means

exposing the secrets they are accused of trying to steal.

On the other hand, Turner told the lawyers he believed the government has treated too much information as secret.

"There has been far too much classification by the government," he said. And while he described it as "an almost intractable problem," he said the CIA is trying to counteract the trend by deliberately publishing more and more of the information it gathers.

As an example, Turner pointed to several crates containing CIA research papers on such topics as "USSR: Trends and Prospects in Educational Attainment" and "Soviet Strategy and Tactics in Economic and Commercial Negotiations with the United States," all of which was made available to the audience.

During a question-and-answer session after his speech, Turner said CIA recruiting efforts, especially on college campuses, have been highly successful during the past few years, even though the period has been marked by unprecedented criticism of the CIA's often provocative conduct in foreign countries such as Vietnam, Angola and Chile.

President Carter appointed Turner to the CIA job in March 1977. Prior to his appointment, Turner served as head of the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. He held the rank of Vice Admiral before his retirement last year from the Navy. After he was appointed to the job he now holds, Turner weathered early criticism

from both in and outside the CIA that he was damaging the agency's effectiveness by dismissing too many valuable veteran officials.

Turner devoted most of his remarks to a discussion of the CIA's ability to protect state secrets against its obligation to account for its conduct.

"A great deal of publicity toward the agency can only be destructive," he said. "The impact of high visibility has a substantial and traumatic effect."

"The plethora of unauthorized leaks has created a perception that we cannot keep secrets."

Yet, Turner said he applauded recent reforms that have given both the White House and Congress better means of ensuring "the legality and propriety" of the CIA's activities.

"We must continually reassure the American public that invasions of their right to privacy will not occur."



Stansfield Turner